

As I stated in my December 10 letter to you, I want to assure the impartiality of IFOR. In the view of my military advisors, this requires minimizing the involvement of U.S. military personnel. But we expect that some individual military officers, for example, working in OSD, DSAA or other agencies, will be involved in planning this effort. We also will offer the Bosnians participation in U.S. programs such as IMET. I agree that maintaining flexibility is important to the success of the effort to achieve a stable military balance within Bosnia. But I will do nothing that I believe will endanger the safety of American troops on the ground in Bosnia. I am sure you will agree that is my primary responsibility.

I want to assure you that I am focusing on what the United States can do. That is why I sent an assessment team to the region to properly evaluate the needs of the Federation. Training programs and provision of non-lethal assistance can begin immediately after the peace agreement enters into force; and provision of small arms can begin after three months. We intend to move expeditiously.

I have given you my word that we will make certain that the Bosnian Federation will receive the assistance necessary to achieve an adequate military balance when IFOR leaves. I intend to keep it.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12 but was not issued as a White House press release.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Elie Wiesel and an Exchange With Reporters

December 13, 1995

Balkan Peace Process

The President. Good morning. I have just had the pleasure of a meeting with Elie Wiesel to discuss our efforts to secure the peace in Bosnia. The citation on the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to Elie Wiesel 9 years ago, describes him as a messenger to mankind. He is a passionate witness to humanity's

capacity for the worst and a powerful example of humanity's capacity for the best.

Throughout his life, he has been an advocate for peace and human dignity and the duty we owe to one another, and I'd like to ask him to say just a few words about the decisions that are before our country and the work of peace in Bosnia.

Mr. Wiesel. Mr. President, it is with a great sense of pride and pleasure that I came to support your decision. I believe it is right; I believe it is honorable. Two years ago or so, when we both spoke at the very important event, the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, I left my prepared remarks and appealed to you, to your humanity, which I know is profound, to do something, anything, to stop the killing, the bloodshed, the violence, the hatred, the massacre in former Yugoslavia.

I know how concerned you were. I know you tried. You tried very hard, trying to influence the European nations, the allies, the United Nations. And what you are doing now will be remembered in history, because it is intervention on the highest level and in its most noble form.

We in the United States represent a certain moral aspect of history. A great nation owes its greatness not only to its military power but also to its moral consciousness, awareness. What would future generations say about us, all of us here in this land, if we do nothing? After all, people were dying; people were killing each other day after day. They stopped, thanks to your leadership. I know of no other world figure today who has done so much in the field for foreign affairs as you have, Mr. President. To send American men and women to preserve the peace is an act of courage and of decency, and I use the word advisedly, it's an act of morality, and that is why I am here with you today, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. I'd like just to make, if I might, one or two other remarks. As all of you know, I will travel to Paris this evening to witness the signing of the peace agreement. After nearly 4 years of terrible destruction, Bosnia is at peace. We must not lose sight of that fact. This is an extraordinary achievement, and the question now is whether the peace will endure.

Ultimately of course, that will have to be decided by the Bosnian people themselves. But they cannot have the opportunity to have peace take hold without American leadership. I believe our Nation has already made the difference between war and peace there. Now, I believe only the United States can make the difference between whether the peace takes hold, because the actions of all of our allies depend upon our working together.

I hope that the Members of Congress will recognize that fundamental truth as they consider support for our troops and for the mission of peace in Bosnia. We have an obligation as we make this decision to remember that Bosnia's war involved a lot of innocent people. Snipers and shells turn schoolyards into graveyards. There were terrified faces of women and girls who were raped as an instrument of war. There were skeletal prisoners behind barbed wire fences in what can only be called concentration camps. There were defenseless men who were shot down into mass graves.

Now we have a chance to end all that and to give Bosnia a chance at a better future. I think we should also not forget that the situation there has not always been hopeless; that's another thing I think that has colored this debate. The fact is that for generations, Bosnia was a place where people of different traditions and faiths could, and did, live side by side in peace. Its people were joined by marriage, by language, by culture.

One of the most heartbreaking things to me is to see refugees from Bosnia in our own country who comprise families that have Croatian and Serbian and Muslim roots within one family, being driven out of their country. We now can give that country a future back again, and I hope the Congress will vote to do it, and I believe America must lead the way in doing it. And I thank you, Elie Wiesel, for being a conscience of this terrible conflict for the last 4 years.

Q. What do you think the chances are of getting support in Congress?

The President. I don't know. We're working hard. We had another—I had another long meeting yesterday with the Members of the Senate. And I understand there's going to be a vote—there are a series of votes there

sometime today. Then I think the House will have to determine what to do based on what the Senate does. That's—my instinct is that they have not—it's not clear to me where it's going, but we have worked very hard, and we will continue to work hard. And in the end I just can't believe that Congress won't support our troops in this mission. That's what I think will happen.

Q. Mr. President, when you sit down with the three Balkan leaders tomorrow, you will come to them as the leader of a nation that is divided about whether to support them. What will you tell them?

The President. Well, if they're concerned about that, I will tell them that our people have always had a reluctance to send our young people in uniform overseas—that goes back throughout our entire history—and that on the whole that has been a healthy thing, because we have not been—we have not been a country that has sought the gains of empire. We have not been a country that has sought to tell other people how they must live their lives, but that we are fundamentally a good people and when we understand our duty, historically, we nearly always do it. That's what I'll—thank you.

Federal Budget

Q. What do you think of the Republicans thinking you shouldn't go, and you should work on the budget?

The President. We will be working on the budget.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Proclamation 6858—Wright Brothers Day, 1995

December 13, 1995

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Ninety-two years ago, Orville Wright manned the first sustained and controlled, machine-powered flight in an airplane he designed and built with his brother Wilbur. This extraordinary journey, though only 12 seconds long, was the first great achievement